Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 DURBAN 00815 211509Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 HEW-04 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AGRE-00 /091 W
----------116116 211514Z /44
R 210830Z DEC 77
FM AMCONSUL DURBAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2769
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LONDON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DURBAN 0815

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: BAGB, EAGR, ELAB, PFOR, SOCI, SF
SUBJ: CHILD LABOR IN THE S.A. SUGAR INDUSTRY

REF: DURBAN A-91

SUMMARY: THE ALLEGED ABUSE OF BLACK CHILD LABOR ON SOME SUGAR PLANTATIONS IN NATAL WAS REPORTED BY THE RAND DAILY MAIL IN A DECEMBER 19 STORY (COPY BEING POUCHED DEPARTMENT). RDM REPORTED THAT CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 13 YEARS OLD WERE BEING EMPLOYED AS FIELD LABORERS IN NATAL FOR AS LITTLE AS .50 CENTS PER DAY, WITHOUT ADEQUATE FOOD OR PROPER LIVING CONDITIONS. IN RESPONSE THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR ASSOCIATION HAS PUBLICLY UNDERTAKEN A PROBE OF REPORTED CONDITIONS. ITS CHAIRMAN HAS ADMITTED TO US THAT THE THRUST OF THE ALLEGATIONS IS TRUE BUT SAID THEY REPRESENT A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF INCIDENTS WHICH ARE NOT TYPICAL OF THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE AND THAT THE USE OF CHILD LABOR IS "NOT INDUSTRY PRACTICE". NEVERTHELESS, THE REVELATIONS ARE LIKELY TO RESULT IN INCREASED INTERNATIONAL
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 DURBAN 00815 211509Z

EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE SAG. THEY MAY PROMPT SOME CHANGES BY THE SUGAR INDUSTRY. END SUMMARY.

1. AS A RESULT OF REPORTS OF SUBSTANDARD SUGAR INDUSTRY WORKING CONDITIONS EXPOSED ON A BRITISH TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY ON SOUTH AFRICA, THE LIBERAL JOHANNESBURG "RAND DAILY MAIL" SENT A TEAM OF BLACK INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS AND A BLACK

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

PHOTOGRAPHER TO VISIT SEVERAL NATAL SUGAR PLANTATIONS FORMERLY OWNED BY THE BRITISH COMPANY TATE AND LYLE (WHICH SOLD ITS SUGAR HOLDINGS IN SEPTEMBER, AFTER THE DOCUMENTARY WAS FILMED, TO A SOUTH AFRICAN CONCERN). THE TEAM REPORTED IT FOUND CHILDREN 13 TO 15 YEARS OLD EMPLOYED IN THE FIELDS AT WAGES OF .50 CENTS TO R1.00 PER DAY, WORKING NINE HOUR DAYS, SIX DAYS PER WEEK, WITHOUT ADEQUATE FOOD OR DECENT SHELTER. MOST REPORTEDLY DID NOT ATTEND SCHOOL AND WERE PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED ON THE PLANTATIONS. THE TEAM ALSO CHRONICLED OVER-CROWDED AND DILAPIDATED CONDITIONS FOR SOME ADULT WORKERS.

2. OWNERS OF PLANTATIONS VISITED BY THE TEAM DECLINED TO COMMENT TO THE PRESS ON THE REPORTS. HOWEVER, THE PROMINENT AND IMAGE-CONSCIOUS SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR ASSOCIATION (SASA) DID NOT DENY THE ALLEGATIONS AND ANNOUNCED AN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION OF THEM. CONOFF SPOKE DECEMBER 20 WITH THE SASA CHAIRMAN ANSON LLOYD WHO SAID HE HAD CHAIRED AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE SENIOR EXECUTIVES DECEMBER 19 TO DELVE INTO THE ALLEGATIONS. HE ADMITTED TO US THAT MANY OF THE REPORTED DETAILS WERE TRUE, SPECIALLY RE THE EMPLOYMENT OF YOUTHS AS YOUNG AS 13 FOR AS LITTLE AS .50 CENTS TO R1.00 PER DAY. HOWEVER HE MAINTAINED ALL WERE EMPLOYED WITH PARENTAL CONSENT AND ON A TEMPORARY BASIS, USUALLY DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS. HE ADDED THEY REPRESENT ONLY A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF BLACK WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRY. HE SAID IT "WAS NOT INDUSTRY PRACTICE" TO EMPLOY SUCH YOUTHS WHICH WAS DONE MORE OUT OF SOCIAL NEED THAN ECONOMIC GAIN.
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

HE SAID THEY WERE GENERALLY TOO YOUNG TO PRODUCE EFFICIENTLY BUT THAT THEY CAME TO PLANTATIONS FROM THE ADJACENT HOMELAND "BEGGING FOR WORK/ AND WERE OFTEN HIRED BECAUSE OWNERS "DID NOT HAVE THE HEART TO TURN THEM AWAY". HE SAID THEY WERE NOT USED IN THE MORE DIFFICULT JOBS SUCH AS CANE CUTTERS BUT AS WATER CARRIERS OR WEEDERS, AND THAT FOOD WAS PROVIDED THEM IF THEY LIVED ON THE PLANTATION. HE DEFENDED THE INDUSTRY'S OVERALL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS FOR ADULTS, POINTING OUT CASH WAGES HAD TRIPLED IN 5 YEARS (FYI: FROM R32 PER MONTH TO R96 PER MONTH FOR A CANE CUTTER PLUS FOOD AND HOUSING). AND THAT R5 MILLION ($5.7 MILLION) HAD BEEN SPENT ON BLACK HOUSING ON SUGAR PLANTATIONS IN THIS SAME PERIOD. HE ADDED THERE WERE CERTAIN UNSPECIFIED "BAD ELEMENTS" IN THE INDUSTRY, BUT SAID THIS WAS A PROBLEM IN ANY INDUSTRY AND THAT, ON BALANCE, HE WOULD COMPARE THE LOCAL SUGAR INDUSTRY'S LABOR PRACTICES AND CONDITIONS FAVORABLY WITH THOSE OF MOST OTHER NATIONS.

3. LLOYD TOLD US HE HAD BEEN CALLED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY JUST PRIOR TO OUR CONVERSATION AND HAD TOLD THEM ESSENTIALLY WHAT HE TOLD US. THUS, THE ABOVE MAY WELL BE THE SAG'S OFFICIAL LINE IN RESPONDING TO ANY OUTCRY RAISED BY THE TV DOCUMENTARY AND PRESS REPORT.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

4. COMMENT: THE GIST OF THE ALLEGATIONS ARE NOT IN DISPUTE, THOUGH DETAILS MAY VARY. THE REVELATIONS WILL BE ANOTHER EMBARRASSMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICA INTERNATIONALLY AND MAY BLEMISH THE IMAGE OF A "PROGRESSIVE INDUSTRY" WHICH THE SASA HAS INCREASINGLY SUCCEEDED IN PROJECTING IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. HOWEVER WE SUSPECT THE PUBLICITY WILL HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT FOR THE WORKERS, AS THE SASA WILL LIKELY ENCOURAGE ELIMINATION OF THE CHILD LABOR PRACTICE AND AMELIORATE SOMEWHAT ADULT LIVING CONDITIONS. HOWEVER, THE DEPRESSED WORLD PRICE FOR SUGAR LEAVES SASA LITTLE MARGIN FROM WHICH TO FINANCE SUCH UNDER-TAKINGS AND ANY IMPROVEMENTS ARE LIKELY TO BE AIMED MORE AT ELIMINATING THE WORST ABUSES THAN AT A WIDER-SCALE IMPROVEMENT IN WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS.
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 DURBAN 00815 211509Z

FARBER

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHILD LABOR, LABOR, SUGAR, INDUSTRY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DURBAN00815
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770475-1282
Format: TEL
From: DURBAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771232/aaaabazz.tel
Line Count: 137
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 283216ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 DURBAN A-91
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 161696
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHILD LABOR IN THE S.A. SUGAR INDUSTRY
TAGS: BAGB, EAGR, ELAB, PFOR, SOCI, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/283216ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009